



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## THE BRESLAU SCHOOL AND JUDAISM.

WHAT was the attitude of the late Prof. Graetz towards modern Judaism? It is to throw more light upon this question that these notes are written.

That Prof. Graetz was imbued with the modern critical spirit is not denied; that he was, *on the whole*, a conforming Jew is also not denied; but it has been denied in effect that he and his school were religious at all, if by being religious be meant desiring communion with God, living a life in accordance with his will, because such a life was his will. Prof. Graetz and his school are accused of being mere external formalists, mere worshippers of the letter, neither having nor caring for spirituality in religion. So long, it has been said, as they have their beloved rites and ceremonies they are content, albeit these rites and ceremonies have lost all religious significance.

Surely this is a most serious charge, and should never have been made unless it could be substantiated. But is it true that Prof. Graetz did not care for religion in the sense we have defined, that it was a matter of indifference to him whether a religious rite had any religious significance or not? In the *Jewish Chronicle* of August 5th, 1887, in an article entitled "Judaism and Biblical Criticism," he wrote as follows:—"The essential fact remains, in spite of criticism, of the recognition of the unity and lofty holiness of God; from this follows the demand for a *holy life* for his servants, for the love of our neighbours, and care for the stranger, the widow and the orphan; in fact, for the lofty ethics which Judaism points as its ideal, and of which the Ten Commandments offer only a short summary." Can there be any doubt that, according to this, Prof. Graetz has the

strongest faith in Judaism as a religion. Judaism was for him certainly not a mere bundle of rites and ceremonies, nay more, it is not merely an ethical system founded upon utility; it teaches an ethical system issuing out of our belief in God, and having our desire to please God as its motive.

In the "In Memoriam" article I wrote in the *Jewish Chronicle*, September 18th, 1891, the following passage occurs, and I think it necessary to re-write it in full:—

"The last time that I had a long conversation with Prof. Graetz, we spoke about the new criticism of the Pentateuch. He said, 'Whatever view we might hold concerning the date of a certain religious document, Judaism would still have taught the purest of beliefs, and the noblest of ethics. The Sabbath would still recall the Divine Providence, ruling over nature. There was no reason, because, the Pentateuch was a composite work, why the Jew should not keep the Passover, and commemorate with his brethren the deliverance of his people by the Divine hand, and bring before himself their great mission. There was no reason why he should not approach his God on the Day of Atonement. The great institutions of Judaism would always be the best means of discipline, the best bond of union between Jew and Jew.' If by this be meant theoretical heterodoxy united with practical orthodoxy, it is no reproach." This last sentence seems to have excited the indignation of one of the editors of this review. With prophetic glow he says that he "cannot away with theoretical heterodoxy united with practical orthodoxy." But curiously, the phrase is the voice of his co-editor—the voice of Jacob, and not the voice of Esau. In an article on the late Prof. Graetz signed I. A. in *Jewish Chronicle*,<sup>1</sup> the writer spoke of this union as being characteristic of the late Prof. Graetz. I, thoroughly "realising the Tragweite of these words," explained the

---

<sup>1</sup> September 11th, 1891.

only sense in which I thought Graetz would have been inclined to adopt them. More curiously still, Mr. Montefiore, in a note to his Notes which appeared in the last number of the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, suggests to his "Unitarian Jew" the adoption of the very same institutions as Graetz suggested. Very possibly the only difference between Mr. Montefiore and a pupil of Prof. Graetz is this—the former adopts in small print that which the latter adopts writ large.

Mr. Schechter, writing in the *Jewish Chronicle*,<sup>1</sup> said that the Holy Scriptures were to Graetz the "life of his life." If the Holy Scriptures were to him the "life of his life," and I believe it was so, must not Graetz have felt the divine presence in the starry heaven above him, and in the moral law within him? And if this be so, can we say that the religion of Graetz was merely a bundle of rites and ceremonies without religious significance?

And were Prof. Graetz's views so thoroughly opposed to progress? Did he not believe in the potentially universalistic character of Judaism? Mr. Schechter wrote,<sup>2</sup> "There can be no doubt that he was in full harmony with all the tendencies of our time. Both in his history and more particularly in the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, he expressed his innermost belief in the progress and development of Judaism." That Mr. Schechter did not misrepresent Prof. Graetz we may see by the following passage.<sup>3</sup> Prof. Graetz says:—"During the long years of persecution and suffering, the few words that were raised in warning against this excess of ceremonialism passed unheard, Judaism gradually assumed a repellent aspect. As a consequence, there followed (and there follows still) apostasy." I cannot refrain from quoting another passage which I wrote myself,<sup>4</sup> "But although there was (at Breslau) this tendency to a

---

<sup>1</sup> September 18th, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> *In loco citato.*

<sup>3</sup> JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, Vol. II., p. 261.

<sup>4</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, September 18th, 1891.

reverent conservatism, we were never taught to paint that which was ugly with a rose colour. It was never hidden from us that Judaism had developed sometimes in a wrong direction, and that, in the Middle Ages especially, unhealthy growths had appeared, which it would be our duty to cut away. I think that Prof. Graetz always regretted that the Talmud had been codified. Development was arrested, Judaism thereby ceased to have an oral law, and we were converted into Karaites of the *Schulehan Aruch*."

I will not deny that there were apparent inconsistencies in Prof. Graetz. After having proved that the Feast of Purim was nothing more, originally, than a *πιθοιγία*, it does seem strange that he should still observe the festival. But surely where we do not understand a teacher, we ought to judge him in the scale of merit. Christianity adopted the Yuletide festival, and made it teach the lesson of goodwill to all men. Does not the book of Esther, in spite of its faults at the end, exemplify the strong nationalism of those of us who still believe with the Psalmist, that "He who guards Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps"?

Prof. Graetz was inconsistent, but must we not all be inconsistent when we leave the orthodox belief of verbal inspiration? Mr. Montefiore teaches that Judaism is theism at its very best, but he wishes to keep the Jewish race distinct: he objects to mixed marriages. What is his sanction for this objection? Not the moral law, for he considers it immoral to call mixed marriages sinful; not a divine external law—for that has ceased to be binding upon him. What is his sanction? Expediency. Prof. Graetz would probably say that on account of the lesson they teach in holiness, in self-denial, remotely, perhaps, on account of the advantage they have upon our health, and certainly as a bond of union within and a wall of separation without, the dietary laws should be observed. Does Mr. Montefiore do well to be angry? Both he and the late Prof. Graetz wished to keep the Jewish race distinct, and for exactly

the same reason. Did not this same desire for separation bring about very much of the nomism of the Talmud? It is possible that Mr. Montefiore will say that his instincts tell him that exogamy is dangerous, but that the non-observance of the dietary laws is not. Perhaps he is right, but if we approve his following his instincts, we must approve the pupils of the Breslau school following theirs.<sup>1</sup> I believe that he is no friend of Judaism who would carry the laws to their extreme logical consequences, but I must try to be liberal. I think Graetz was wrong, with his views, to be illiberal to the school of Holdheim, although he was perfectly right in thinking that the founding of such synagogues as that of the Johannesstrasse in Berlin would lead to the forming of sects in Judaism. My revered predecessor at the Owens College used often to tell me that he had never known a truly liberal man, and never one who was always consistent and logical. Prof. Graetz was not consistent or logical. All Israel may be deemed happy that he was not. Had he been logical he would probably have been held to be outside the limits of Judaism. Mr. Montefiore is illiberal, as I think Prof. Graetz was, and the Jewish community of England may truly congratulate itself that he is neither logical nor consistent.

Personally I believe it would be a misfortune if in religion we pinned ourselves down to a strict logic. Logically there is no resting place between rigid orthodoxy in belief and being outside the limits of a positive religion. There is nothing new in this. Hobbes pointed it out in the seventeenth century. But we should be guided by our hearts as well as by stern reason. I might state what I feel myself as follows: I agree thoroughly with Mr. Montefiore, as to Judaism teaching Theism. I believe that

---

<sup>1</sup> This argument is not affected by the fact that exogamy is specially prohibited in Exodus xxxiv. 16, as leading to apostasy, while the dietary laws are laid down as laws of "holiness" and, according to some critics, referred originally, at any rate in their full development, to the priests only. It is most probable too, that the idea of *separateness* lay in the root שקט.

the divine spirit rested upon the prophets of Israel in a measure that it rested upon no other of God's creatures, but I believe in the immanence of God in history, and I do not deny the inspiration of men like Jesus of Nazareth, or of the prophet of Mecca or, going outside the Semitic race, of men like Gautama Buddha. I believe that a man who could separate himself from all family ties, from all former friends, to become a simple priest in an alien church, and who could write such a beautiful hymn as "Lead, kindly light," was also inspired. I should not deny inspiration even to great poets and statesmen, or even to the great legalists of the Roman Law. This is truly the Jewish view. Many of the blessings in the ancient *Amidah* seem to refer exclusively to Israel, but one blessing does not, "Thou favourest man with knowledge, and teachest mortals understanding." All knowledge, all understanding come from God.<sup>1</sup>

I hold with Mr. Montefiore that the Jewish race should be kept distinct. If I am asked for my reasons, I should answer, because Judaism has kept its belief in one holy God far purer than other faiths have done. The majority of Christians are still Tritheists or Dutheists.<sup>2</sup> Islam, though it holds strongly to the belief that there is no God but Allah, seems to adopt superstitions with a fatal readiness.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Maimonides specially refers to Jesus and Mohammed as paving the way for the Messiah. See also the ritual Blessings in *Berachot* 58 a, where a non-Israelite is called a *חכם* receiving his *חכמה* (wisdom) from God. It is true, however, that in the *Schulchan Aruch* (Orach Chayim 224), the wisdom which the non-Israelite receives from God is stated to be *secular* wisdom. Maimonides in the parallel passage does not make this restriction.

<sup>2</sup> A clergyman recently told me that the doctrine of the Trinity could be accepted by the most advanced Theists. God the Father stood for the immanence of God in nature, God the Son for his immanence in every individual soul, and God the Holy Ghost for his immanence in history; and he suggested that Trinitarian Christianity would be the universal religion of the future. I could for the moment only hold my peace, and say to myself "Che sarà sarà."

<sup>3</sup> We must not suppose that Islam is incapable of appropriating the best

I often muse on the idle question as to what would have been the position of Judaism in Europe if Charles Martel had been defeated at Poitiers. And turning to the Indian religions, however pure and subtle Buddhism may have been at its inception, it has now become idolatrous. Let Israel keep distinct holding to the faith in one holy God, let us not hide our light behind a bushel, and God will make use of his people in his own good time.

With respect to the question of progress in Judaism, I should remind my friends that we are not beginning with a *tabula rasa*, and that, therefore, reformers cannot disregard the past, and that they, therefore, must be attached to historical Judaism. But I should like to insist, with Graetz, that history does not repeat itself. We cannot disregard the past; but, at the same time, a Jew of the nineteenth century must not act and teach as if he still lived in the Middle Ages. To follow Maimonides, we must not be disciples of the Græco-Arabic philosophy, but we must act in his spirit, as Maimonides would have acted if he had been living here and now. In England, perhaps, the learned Reader in Rabbinical Literature at Cambridge is the best exponent we have of historical Judaism. He shows us the importance for our own time of both the Maimonists and anti-Maimonists, of the Chassidim in Poland, and the author of the *Moreh Nebuchim* Hazzeman. With regard to ritual reforms, I think that each congregation should, reverently and cautiously, consult its own needs and its own wants. Each congregation should worship God in the manner which satisfies its own spiritual aspirations. But I am very much opposed to insisting upon the differences in principle

---

thoughts of the age. I need only refer to the Moorish culture of the Middle Ages. Djelal-ed-Din in his Commentary on the Quran (Sura 88) to the words "the earth is extended," says "This passage shews that the earth is flat and not round as the astronomers assert, but whether it be round or flat, not a single pillar of our religion is disturbed." See also an article on "Cultural Progress in Islam," by Professor Vambery, in the February number of the *Eastern and Western Review*.



between orthodoxy and reform. Whether the sacrifices shall be restored, or the walls of Jerusalem rebuilt, are much more eschatological questions than questions the answers to which will bear much upon our practical ethical life. I should much regret if the expression of a man's faith upon these points should be made a shibboleth, and a Jew classified according to his belief upon them. I believe that the question of ritual reform is a question of means, and not of ends. I do not think that the great truths of God, and immortality, and the blessedness of prayer, are better taught in my own religious class in the Manchester congregation of British Jews than they were in the Ghetto in the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> I believe that, both in the East End of London and in the West End, there are to be found amongst Jews many patterns of shining virtue, of kindness, of gentleness, of forbearance. I believe that, both in Whitechapel and in Hyde Park, Jews are to be found thoroughly conscious of the mission of Israel, and earnestly desirous of being faithful to it. I, therefore, do not hope that either the right or the left party in Judaism will conquer the other. Both parties are necessary, and each will satisfy its own followers.

As I have said, I am opposed, as in the highest degree inexpedient, and perhaps unspiritual for our own times, to the carrying of the laws of the Bible to their extreme logical consequences;<sup>2</sup> but I believe that the future of Judaism, so long as Judaism remains a particularist religion, must lie

---

<sup>1</sup> We must not forget that the beautiful prayer על בן נקוה, and the magnificent additions to the third blessing of the Amidah on the New Year and the Day of Atonement were offered up, in the Ghetto, at least as fervently as the prayers for the restoration of sacrifices.

<sup>2</sup> With regard to carrying laws to their extreme consequences, the following interesting passage from the pen of a lawyer occurs in the *Law Quarterly Review* of January, 1892, page 15: Certain "legal rules pursued to their logical conclusions, land us in moral anomalies, but human nature, when expelled with a pitchfork, only returns in the form of equitable rules." What we need in modern Judaism are a few equitable rules.

in a spiritual nomism. Prof. Toy tells us that Jesus of Nazareth preached such a nomism.<sup>1</sup> When forms and ceremonies have become utterly harmful they should be lopped off. But, as a rule, it is better to build up than to destroy, better to breathe new life into the old vessels than to shatter them. When the Feast of Pentecost lost its importance as the Day of First Fruits, it was made to live again as the Day of Revelation. Though sacrifices were abolished, and the priesthood disappeared, and, therefore, the Day of Atonement lost much of its Biblical significance, it lived a brighter life as a day of individual reconciliation with God, and of mutual peace and goodwill between man and man.

Of course, a pupil does not identify himself with every word a teacher spoke, however beloved that teacher may have been ; but I hope that in what I have now said I have not widely departed from the views of the late Prof. Graetz.

Of course, also, I do not deny that the best teaching of Breslau may sometimes be abused by its adherents, and misunderstood by friends as well as by those who are unfriendly.

L. M. SIMMONS.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. especially the Epistle of James. Conscience is so often called the supreme arbiter, that it is worth while to point out that its dictates, even in the sphere of morality, are not always to be relied upon. The Stoics held suicide to be a virtue ; English law keeps the conscience of the ordinary Englishman right upon this subject by telling him that if he attempts to commit suicide, whatever may be his motives, he will be punished as a criminal. For some weighty remarks upon the importance of external positive law as the guide of the inner voice, I refer the reader to the third volume of Sir James Stephen's *History of the Criminal Law*. Sabbathai Zevi abolished the law, with what results history tells us. The dividing line between antinomianism and immorality is very fine indeed.